

our PC: deny laughing OWIE: dominant males think in parameter gates OYFMDK: but what are you up to? know OOD: chuckle & grin CID: crying in disgrace CUL: see you later YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE SAYING ONLINE. CYO: see you online DBA: doing business as usual DL: dead link DLTBBB: don't let the bed bugs bite DIKU: do I know you? EMFBI: excuse me for butting in F2F: face to face FC: fingers crossed FISH: first in, still here FMTYEWTK: far more than you ever wanted to know FOMFI: falling off my chair laughing FTRQMN: from the bottom of my heart FUR:

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community

County residents speak their piece on charter

by **By Steve Hunter**

Changing the charter

Citizens can submit comments and changes to the King County Charter Review Commission on the web:

www.metrokc.gov/exec/charter/feedback.aspx,
by e-mail: charter.review@metrokc.gov or at
206-296-4628.

Nonpartisan elections and instant runoff voting each received citizen support at a public hearing about how to improve King County government.

Only a handful of citizens turned out to testify in front of the county's Charter Review Commission Thursday at the Kent Senior Center.

But they raised two issues that have come up often at seven of the nine meetings conducted so far this year throughout the county.

"I would like there to be nonpartisan positions for all," said Kent resident Miriam Helgeland, who served on the Charter Review Commission in 1987, and who came to speak Thursday. "But the County Council is not going to put to vote something that changes how they're elected."

Every 10 years a citizen commission reviews the county charter, a document that serves as the county's constitution and provides the framework for how county government is set up and operates.

The sheriff's position is an elected office, but nonpartisan, which means candidates run without a party label. Most of the other elected positions in the county, including the Council, are partisan.

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Councilmember Julia Patterson, a Democrat from SeaTac who represents District No. 5, which includes Kent, attended the meeting and responded to the nonpartisan comment.

"A label gives a general sense of political perspective," Patterson said. "If you're a Democrat, you believe government can make a difference. If you're a Republican, you believe people are better off with less government in their lives. That's a broad description, but it gives you something about the individuals."

But Patterson agreed the party labels could cause problems on the Council.

"If you put labels on them, they tend to band together," Patterson said. "The Democrats meet. The Republicans meet. It could divide us unnecessarily. And most issues are not partisan."

A couple of citizens brought up instant runoff voting, which uses a single election in November to fill positions rather than using a primary as well. Each party may nominate as many candidates as it would like to be on the ballot. Voters then rank as many candidates as they like in order of preference.

If a candidate receives a majority of the first choices, he or she is elected. If no candidate receives a majority, the last place candidate is eliminated and those votes get allocated to the voters' second choices. That process continues until one candidate gains a majority of votes.

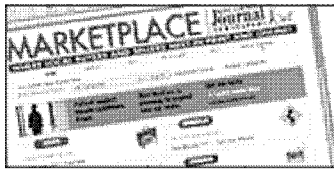
Pierce County voters approved instant runoff voting last fall for elections starting in 2008.

"With instant runoff, you can vote for your second or third choices," Helgeland said. "That person moves up if your first choice is not taken."

About 150 issues have been proposed to the Charter Review Commission, said Mark Yango, the Charter Review Coordinator. Yango said that would be narrowed to eight or 10 issues and the commission will decide which charter amendments to propose.

Public hearings later this year or early next year will take place on those proposed amendments before final amendments are sent to the Council. Any amendments approved by the Council will be put on the November 2008 ballot for voter approval.

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